



Today is going to be a good day!



Page 7

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U.N. says the U.S. has 'legal obligation' to fund agencies after Trump withdraws from several

By **FARNOUSH AMIRI**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The top United Nations official on Thursday said the United States has a "legal obligation" to keep paying its dues that fund U.N. agencies after the White House announced that it is withdrawing support from more than 30 initiatives operated by the world body. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he regretted President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from 31 U.N.-related agencies, including the U.N.'s population agency and the U.N. treaty that establishes international climate negotiations. The U.S. also will depart dozens of other global organizations or initiatives not affiliated with the U.N.

"As we have consistently underscored, assessed contributions to the United Nations regular budget and peacekeeping budget, as approved by the General Assembly, are a legal obligation under the UN Charter for all Member States, including the United States," Stephane Dujarric, a spokesperson



The U.N. flag flies on a stormy day at the United Nations during the United Nations General Assembly, Sept. 22, 2022.

for Guterres, said in a statement. He added that despite the announcement, the U.N. entities targeted will keep doing their work: "The United Nations has a responsibility to deliver for those who depend on us." The U.N. and several entities affected said they learned about the withdrawal

through news reports and the White House social media post Wednesday. There has been no formal communication from the Trump administration outlining the announcement, Dujarric told reporters. Many U.N. officials refused to comment on the impact the move would have on their agencies because

they had not been given details or official word from anyone in the U.S. government. Following a yearlong review of participation in and funding for all international organizations, Trump signed an executive order suspending American support for 66 groups, agencies and commissions.

Many of the targets are U.N.-related agencies, commissions and advisory panels that focus on climate, labor, migration and other issues the Trump administration has categorized as catering to diversity and "woke" initiatives. Some of the agencies impacted, including the U.N. Population Fund, an organization that provides sexual and reproductive health services worldwide, has long been a lightning rod for Republican opposition, and Trump cut funding for it during his first term. The withdrawal from the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC, came as less of a surprise as Trump and his allies had previously withdrawn U.S. support from other climate initiatives. The 1992 agreement between 198 countries to financially support climate change activities in developing countries is the underlying treaty for the landmark Paris climate agreement. Trump withdrew from that agreement soon after returning to the White House. □

Associated Press

Judge blocks Trump administration from purging DEI-related terms from Head Start grant applications

By **MORIAH BALINGIT**
AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge has temporarily blocked the Trump administration's efforts to remake Head Start, ordering

ing it to stop purging words it associates with diversity, equity and inclusion from grant applications and barring it from laying off any more federal employees in the Office of Head Start.

The order came this week in a lawsuit filed in April against Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other officials. The lawsuit accuses the Trump administration of illegally dismantling Head Start by shutting down federal Head Start offices and laying off half the staff. It also challenges the administration's attempts to bar children who are in the U.S. illegally from Head Start programs and to ban language they view as suggestive of DEI. The plaintiff organizations representing Head Start providers and parents said in a court filing last month that officials told a Head Start director in Wisconsin to axe the terms "race," "belonging" and "preg-

nant people" from her grant application. They later sent a list with nearly 200 words the department discouraged her from using in her application, including "Black," "Native American," "disability" and "women." A Health and Human Services spokesperson said he could not comment on the judge's order. Head Start, founded six decades ago as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, is an early education and family support program that serves hundreds of thousands of children who come from low-income households, foster homes or homelessness. It is federally funded but operated by nonprofits, schools and local governments. Joel Ryan, who heads the Washington

State Head Start & Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, said the order halts an attack on Head Start centers. "When a Head Start program has their funding withheld because of their efforts to provide effective education to children with autism, serve tribal members on a reservation, or treat all families with respect, it is an attack on the fundamental promise of the Head Start program," Ryan said. The directive on the forbidden words raised confusion for Head Start directors, who must describe how they will use the money in grant applications and are required by law to provide demographic information about the families they serve. □



Secretary of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., speaks during an event on prescription drug prices in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, Friday, Dec. 19, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press

Senate rejects Trump's military threats against Venezuela with war powers vote

By STEPHEN GROVES and JOEY CAPPELLETTI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate advanced a resolution Thursday that would limit President Donald Trump's ability to conduct further attacks against Venezuela, sounding a note of disapproval for his expanding ambitions in the Western Hemisphere.

Democrats and five Republicans voted to advance the war powers resolution on a 52-47 vote and ensure a vote next week on final passage. It has virtually no chance of becoming law because Trump would have to sign it if it were to pass the Republican-controlled House. Still, it was a significant gesture that showed unease among some Republicans after the U.S. military seized Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro in a surprise nighttime raid over the weekend.

Trump's administration is now seeking to control Venezuela's oil resources and its government, but the war powers resolution would require congressional approval for any further attacks on the South American country.

"To me, this is all about going forward," said Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley, one of the five Republican votes. "If the president should determine, 'You know what? I need to put troops on the ground of Venezuela.' I think that would require Congress to weigh in."

The other Republicans who backed the resolution were Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and Todd Young of Indiana.

Trump reacted to their votes by saying on social media that they "should never be elected to office again" and that the vote "greatly hampers American Self Defense and National Security."

Democrats had failed to pass several such resolutions in the months that Trump escalated his campaign against Venezuela.



President Donald Trump listens as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine speaks at Mar-a-Lago, Saturday, Jan. 3, 2026, in Palm Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

But lawmakers argued that now that Trump has captured Maduro and set his sights to other conquests such as Greenland, the vote presents Congress with an opportunity.

"This wasn't just a procedural vote. It's a clear rejection of the idea that one person can unilaterally send American sons and daughters into harm's way without Congress, without debate," said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York.

Lawmakers' response to the Venezuela operation

Republican leaders have said they had no advance notification of the raid early morning Saturday to seize Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, but mostly expressed satisfaction this week as top administration officials provided classified briefings on the operation.

Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., who forced the vote on the resolution, said he believes many Republicans were caught off guard by the outcome. He said that Trump's recent comments to The New York Times suggesting U.S. oversight in Venezuela could last for years combined with details revealed in the classified briefings prompted some lawmakers to conclude that "this is too big to

let a president do it without Congress."

The administration has used an evolving set of legal justifications for the monthslong campaign in Central and South America, from destroying alleged drug boats under authorizations for the global fight against terrorism to seizing Maduro in what was ostensibly a law enforcement operation to put him on trial in the United States.

Republican leaders have backed Trump.

"I think the president has demonstrated at least already a very strong commitment to peace through strength, especially in this hemisphere," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D. "I think Venezuela got that message loudly and clearly."

A vote on a similar resolution in November narrowly failed to gain the majority needed. Paul and Murkowski were the only Republicans voting in favor then.

Paul, an outspoken proponent of war powers resolutions, has acknowledged that Maduro is seen as a "bad guy" and "a socialist and an autocrat." But he said that deploying troops to Venezuela is no longer a "hypothetical."

"It's interesting to see that

more people, at least on my side, now are interested in who has the war prerogative, who was the prerogative to initiate or declare war," he told reporters after Thursday's vote.

House Democrats were introducing a similar resolution on Thursday.

The rarely enforced War Powers Act

Trump criticized the Senate vote as "impeding the President's Authority as Commander in Chief" under the Constitution.

Presidents of both parties have long argued the War Power Act infringes on their authority as commander in chief. Passed in 1973 in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and over the veto of Republican President Richard Nixon it has never succeeded in directly forcing a president to halt military action.

Congress declares war while the president serves as commander in chief, according to the Constitution. But lawmakers have not formally declared war since World War II, granting presidents broad latitude to act unilaterally. The law requires presidents to notify Congress within 48 hours of deploying forces and to end military action within 60 to 90 days absent authorization limits that presi-

dents of both parties have routinely stretched.

Democrats argue those limits are being pushed further than ever. Some Republicans have gone further still, contending congressional approval is unnecessary altogether.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a close Trump ally who traveled with the president aboard Air Force One on Sunday, said he would be comfortable with Trump taking over other countries without congressional approval, including Greenland.

"The commander in chief is the commander in chief. They can use military force," Graham said.

Greenland may further test the limits

Graham's comments come as the administration weighs not only its next steps in Venezuela, but also Greenland. The White House has said the "military is always an option" when it comes to a potential American takeover of the world's largest island.

Republicans have cited Greenland's strategic value, but most have balked at the idea of using the military to take the country. Some favor a potential deal to purchase the country, while others have acknowledged that is an unlikely option when Denmark and Greenland have rejected Trump's overtures. Democrats want to get out in front of any military action and are already preparing to respond. Arizona Sen. Ruben Gallego said he expected soon to introduce a resolution "to block Trump from invading Greenland."

Greenland belongs to a NATO ally, Denmark, which has prompted a much different response from Republican senators than the situation in Venezuela.

On Thursday, Sen. Roger Wicker, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, met with the Danish ambassador to the United States, Jesper Møller Sørensen. □

Hochul and Mamdani unveil free child care plan in New York City

By **ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City parents may soon have access to free child care for their 2-year-olds, under a plan unveiled Thursday by Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a major boon for the city's mayor on one of his signature campaign promises just days into his new job.

The two Democrats announced the proposals at a celebratory event in Brooklyn, with Hochul and Mamdani casting the initiative as a transformative step toward easing the city's notoriously high cost of living.

"This is the day that everything changes," Hochul said, also debuting a wider proposal to expand state-wide access to child care in the coming years.

For Mamdani, whose ambitious agenda has been met with heavy skepticism and questions about financial support from the state, the announcement was a significant political victory in the opening days of his mayoralty, coming after a campaign that centered



New York Governor Kathy Hochul speaks during a press conference with New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani and NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch, Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026, in New York.

Associated Press

on elevating the needs of the city's struggling working-class residents.

"Today we take one step to realizing a city where every New Yorker, every family, every child can afford to keep calling it their home," Mamdani said.

In a nod to the questions surrounding his ability to carry out his agenda, Mam-

dani added: "To those who doubt the power of the people to make their own destiny, to the cynics who insist that politics is too broken to deliver meaningful change, to those who think that the promises of a campaign cannot survive once confronted with the realities of government, today is your answer."

The program will begin slowly, focusing first on "high-need areas" selected by the city, then expanding gradually over years until it becomes a universal program, officials said. The mayor expects the program to cover around 2,000 children this fall, though he said it was not clear where the first

seats would open up. Hochul, a moderate who is up for reelection this year, has been aligned with the city's new progressive mayor on his plan to offer free child care in the city, though questions remain on precisely how the program will take shape and what it might cost over the long term.

The governor said she is committing to funding the first two years of the city's free child care program for 2-year-olds, describing it as an expansion of the city's existing pre-K and 3-K programs, though she said it was difficult to forecast ongoing costs.

Additionally, Hochul rolled out a sweeping, longer-term proposal to expand access to universal pre-K statewide, with the goal of having the program available throughout New York by the start of the 2028-2029 school year.

Hochul said she anticipates investing \$1.7 billion in the near term for the programs she announced Thursday bringing her proposed child care and pre-K spending to \$4.5 billion for the coming fiscal year. □

Trump officials and Louisiana put an end to another decades-old school desegregation order

By **COLLIN BINKLEY**

AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration and Louisiana officials have lifted another decades-old school desegregation order, part of a campaign to end court mandates they describe as outdated.

A federal judge on Monday approved a joint motion from Louisiana and the U.S. Justice Department to dismiss a 1967 lawsuit in DeSoto Parish schools, a district of about 5,000 students in the state's northwest. It's the second such dismissal since the Justice Department began working to overturn desegregation cases it once championed.

Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill thanked President Donald Trump and Attorney General Pam Bondi on

Wednesday for "helping us to finally end some of these cases." "DeSoto Parish has its school system back," Murrill said in a statement. "For the last 10 years, there have been no disputes among the parties, yet

the consent decree remained." The case dates to 1967, when the Justice Department sued DeSoto Parish to end its racially segregated school system. The case resulted in a 1970 court order requiring the

district to eliminate segregation and provide regular progress reports. The order was modified several times over the decades but there had been little activity in recent years. In the motion for dismissal, Louisiana and Trump officials said the order was no longer needed. "While this case has been pending for over a half-century, there has been no dispute among the parties since 2014," they wrote in a Dec. 30 court filing. "The parties thus are no longer adverse, and there is no case or controversy."

Their motion was approved by U.S. District Judge S. Maurice Hicks Jr., who was appointed by former President George W. Bush.

State officials say the court orders place an unfair burden on school districts. Districts under such orders usu-

ally have to get approval from the court to build new schools, change attendance boundaries or make policy changes touching on court orders.

Civil rights groups say the orders are needed to fight the enduring impact of racial discrimination.

DeSoto went to the court for numerous changes over the years, including new attendance zones in 2014 that remain in place today. The district also files status reports showing the racial breakdown of students and teachers, along with data on student transfers. The district's last report was filed in October.

Louisiana Republicans see the decades-old desegregation orders as a challenge to local control and have worked to get them lifted in recent years. □



A group of African American students, left, enter the Boothville-Venice School in Plaquemines Parish, La., on Sept. 12, 1966, as a group of white mothers wait at the entrance of the school.

Associated Press

Somalia denies U.S. allegation that it destroyed food aid warehouse

By OMAR FARUK and DENG MACHOL

Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP)

— Somalia's government on Thursday denied an allegation by the U.S. government that authorities in Mogadishu destroyed an American-funded warehouse belonging to the World Food Program and seized food aid earmarked for impoverished civilians. The U.S. State Department said Wednesday that it has suspended all assistance from Washington to Somalia's federal government over the allegations, saying the Trump administration has "a zero-tolerance policy for waste, theft and diversion of life-saving assistance."

A senior U.S. State Department official said authorities at the Mogadishu port demolished the warehouse of the World Food Program, a Rome-based U.N. agency, at the direction of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud "with no prior notification or coordination with international donor countries, including the United States." The official spoke



In this May 18, 2019 file photo, newly-arrived women who fled drought line up to receive food distributed by local volunteers at a camp for displaced persons in the Daynile neighborhood on the outskirts of the Somali capital Mogadishu.

on condition of anonymity to discuss private reporting from American diplomats in the region.

Somalia's foreign ministry said that the food in question wasn't destroyed and that "the commodities referenced in recent reports remain under the custody and control of the World

Food Program, including assistance provided by the United States."

The foreign ministry said that expansion and repurposing works at the Mogadishu port are underway as part of broader developments, but ongoing activities there have not affected the custody and distribution of hu-

manitarian assistance.

Somalia "remains fully committed to humanitarian principles, transparency, and accountability, and values its partnership with the United States and all international donors," it said. It gave no other details.

But the Somali government account was contradicted

by the WFP, which said in a statement to The Associated Press that its warehouse in Mogadishu port had been demolished by port authorities.

That warehouse "contained 75 metric tons of specialized nutritious foods intended for the treatment of malnourished pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls and young children," the statement said. "The warehouse is crucial for WFP's emergency operations at a moment when almost a quarter of the population (4.4 million people) are facing crisis levels of hunger or worse in Somalia."

Located in the Horn of Africa, Somalia is one of the world's poorest nations and has been beset by chronic strife and insecurity exacerbated by multiple natural disasters, including severe droughts, for decades.

The U.S. provided \$770 million in assistance for projects in Somalia during the last year of Democratic President Joe Biden's administration, but only a fraction of that went directly to the government. □

Associated Press

Iran 'does not desire a war but we are ready for it,' says foreign minister

By BASSEM MROUE

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Iran does not want war with Israel or the United States, but is ready to fight back if attacked again, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Thursday. Speaking in Beirut, Araghchi told reporters that Iran is also ready for negotiations with the U.S. over its nuclear program as long as the talks are based on mutual respect rather than "dictation" by Washington. The minister's comments came as many fear that close U.S. ally Israel will target Iran again as it did during the 12-day war in June, during which Israel killed senior military officials and nuclear scientists and the U.S. bombed Iranian nuclear enrichment sites.

"America and Israel have tested their attack on Iran and this attack and strategy faced extreme failure," Araghchi said at the start of a two-day visit to Lebanon. "If they repeat it, they will face the same results." "We are ready for any choice. We don't desire a war but we are ready for it," Araghchi said.

U.S. President Donald Trump reimposed a "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran in February in an effort to block its development of nuclear weapons. The campaign included U.S. led strikes on three critical Iranian enrichment facilities in June.

Araghchi said Tehran is ready for negotiations, adding: "But I say that the negotiations should be

based on mutual respect and mutual interests."

"We believe that once the Americans reach the outcome that constructive and positive negotiations rather than ordering dictation are the framework, then at that time the results of these negotiations become fruitful," he said.

Iran had been enriching uranium up to 60% purity a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels after Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers in 2018. Tehran long has maintained its atomic program is peaceful, though the West and the IAEA, the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, say Iran had an organized nuclear weapons program until 2003.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, right, gestures as he meets with Amer Bisat, the Lebanese minister of Economy and Trade, in Beirut, Lebanon, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026.

Associated Press

Trump last month warned Iran that the U.S. could carry out further military strikes if the country attempts to reconstitute its nuclear program as he held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Florida. Araghchi's visit to Beirut came as the Lebanese military said it had concluded the first phase of a plan to

disarm factions, such as Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Iran's foreign minister headed an economic delegation for talks with Lebanese officials on regional and international affairs.

"Iran desires having comprehensive relations with Lebanon, including economic partnerships," Araghchi said. □

Russia frees French political scholar in a prisoner swap for a basketball player

By SYLVIE CORBET, THOMAS ADAMSON and SAMUEL PETREQUIN

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Laurent Vinatier, a French political scholar serving a three-year sentence in Russia and facing new charges of espionage, has been freed in a prisoner swap with France, officials said Thursday.

French President Emmanuel Macron said on X that Vinatier is “free and back in France,” expressing “relief” and “gratitude” to diplomatic staff for their efforts to win his release.

In exchange, Russian basketball player Daniil Kasatkin, jailed in France and whose extradition was demanded by the United States, was released and returned to Russia on Thursday, Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB, said in a statement.

Russian state news agency Tass released what it said was FSB footage showing Vinatier in a black track suit and winter jacket being informed about his release, to which he said “Thank you” in Russian, being driven in a car and boarding a plane after Kasatkin descended from it. It wasn't



French citizen Laurent Vinatier sits in a cage prior to a court session at the Zamoskvoretsky District Court in Moscow, Oct. 14, 2024.

Associated Press

immediately clear when the video was filmed. Vinatier was arrested in Moscow in June 2024. Russian authorities accused him of failing to register as a “foreign agent” while collecting information about Russia's “military and military-technical activities” that could be used to the detriment of national security.

A court convicted him and

sentenced him to a three-year prison term.

Last year, Vinatier was also charged with espionage, according to the FSB a criminal offense punishable by between 10 and 20 years in prison in Russia. The scholar has been pardoned by Russian President Vladimir Putin, the security agency said.

France's Foreign Ministry said that Vinatier was be-

ing welcomed at the Quai d'Orsay alongside his parents by Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot.

The ministry said that Barrot informed ambassadors of Vinatier's release “at the moment of the president's tweet,” during a closed-door address. Barrot would post publicly “after his meeting with Laurent Vinatier and his family,” the ministry said.

Putin had promised to look into Vinatier's case after a French journalist asked him during his annual news conference on Dec. 19 whether Vinatier's family could hope for a presidential pardon or his release in a prisoner exchange. The Russian president said at the time that he knew “nothing” about it.

Several days later, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Russia had made “an offer to the French” about Vinatier.

Vinatier is an adviser for the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, a Switzerland-based nongovernmental organization, which said in June 2024 that it was doing “everything possible to assist” him.

The charges that he was convicted on relate to a law that requires anyone collecting information on military issues to register with authorities as a foreign agent.

Human rights activists have criticized the law and other recent legislation as part of a Kremlin crackdown on independent media and political activists intended to stifle criticism of the war in Ukraine. □

Venezuela to release a ‘significant number’ of prisoners as gesture to ‘seek peace’

JORGE RUEDA

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Venezuela will release a “significant number” of citizens and foreigners from its prisons in a decision that the head of the country's legislature described Thursday as a gesture to “seek peace” less than a week after former President Nicolás Maduro was captured by U.S. forces to face federal drug-trafficking charges in New York.

Jorge Rodríguez, brother of acting President Delcy Rodríguez and head of the National Assembly, did not specify who they would be releasing or how many people would be released. The Penal Forum, a human rights organization in Ven-

ezuela, said that as of Dec. 29, 2025, there were 863 people detained in Venezuela “for political reasons.” “We will be verifying each

release. We already know of some people on their way to freedom, including foreigners,” wrote Alfredo Romero, director of the Fo-

rum, in a post on X.

The release of opposition figures and critics has been a longtime demand by Venezuela's opposition and the United States government.

Despite mass detentions following the tumultuous 2024 election, Venezuela's government denies that there are “political prisoners” and accuse those detained of plotting to destabilize Maduro's government.

“Consider this a gesture by the Bolivarian government, which is broadly intended to seek peace,” Rodríguez said in an announcement publicized over TV.

Little movement was immediately seen outside one of

Venezuela's most notable prisons, where a number of the detainees are held.

On Wednesday, the Trump administration sought to assert its control over Venezuelan oil, seizing a pair of sanctioned tankers transporting petroleum and announcing plans to relax some sanctions so the U.S. can oversee the sale of Venezuela's petroleum worldwide.

Both moves reflect the administration's determination to make good on its effort to control the next steps in Venezuela through its vast oil resources after President Donald Trump pledged after the capture of Maduro that the U.S. will “run” the country. □



Police guard El Helicoide, the headquarters of Venezuela's intelligence service and detention center, in Caracas, Venezuela, Thursday, Jan. 8, 2026, after National Assembly President Jorge Rodríguez said the government would release Venezuelan and foreign prisoners.

Associated Press

Food culture in Aruba

(Oranjestad) – Like many other cultures, an important aspect of the Aruban cultural identity is our connection to food and food traditions. The local food traditions consist of a melting pot of different cultural and religious eating habits and dishes.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

The routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner on the island is one that does not completely follow a European or American routine, despite the major influences from these parts of the world on our culture and way of living. When it comes to the three important meals of the day, most of the Aruban population follows a Latin-American influenced routine.

Breakfast

Breakfast in Aruba is quite simple: a cup of coffee or tea, some bread, and sometimes an egg. Sometimes, due to the need of a quick “to-go” breakfast, you may also find many snack trucks and cafes that sell sandwiches, pastechis (meat pie), arepas and empanadas early in the morning.

Main Meal

The main meal is typically eaten in most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or

pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can be largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands* include sopi bonch'i rabo (red kidney bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondongo (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

Dinner Time

Dinner time can vary significantly from household to household. Unlike the U.S. or in Europe, dinner time typically does not consist of a whole (warm) meal. Instead, the evening “meal” can typically consist of something lighter, like a sandwich, though it is not uncommon to see leftovers from the main meal reheated and eaten again. Tea and coffee are often also served with the evening snack.

(Religious) Holidays

Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences, most notably from Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous pan di ham* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with



stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and homemade fruit punch. Desserts include bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesillo (flan), bolo preto (fruit cake), drigidek (gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.

Snacks and tasty delights

Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty delights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco*, baskets, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more.

These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun. □

*ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao

*Pan di ham: Derived from the Venezuelan Pan de Jamon (rolled up bread with ham, raisins and olives)

*Saco: Saco literally means “bag”. Saco contains fried potatoes, plantains, chicken (and ribs) and a Johnny cake, served in a paper bag.

Source: Voeding, voedingsgewoonten en gerechten op Aruba (Nutrition, Food Traditions and Dishes on Aruba) by Biblioteca Nacional Aruba

Today is going to be a good day

(Oranjestad)—Here's why: **Aruba Today collected some things to do BEYOND the beach. Yes, we know. Aruba, located 15 miles north of Venezuela in the warm waters of the southern Caribbean, is home to beautiful white-sand beaches, 82-degree days, and thus ideal for the perfect beach day. But we are also blessed with some of the warmest people in the world and our island is 19.6 miles long and 6 miles across, with a total area of 70 square miles. Bit more to discover than the white stretch on the coastline we say. Let's mention some of these hidden gems.**

Nature Calls

The Arikok National park is worth the ride. We love the hikes that are guided by the park's rangers whose job is to maintain trails and

protect natural resources. The flora and fauna are beautiful and the historical sites tell you about the island's indigenous roots. The guided tours are even free of charge. If you are not up to walking, you can drive through the park, one way or another this park is a great place to spend an entire day. Cruising through the landscape you end up at some of the most stunning beaches like Dos Playa or Daimara Beach. In Total the park consists of 7907 acres protected nature with a richness of animals living in it. The Aruban whip-tail lizard (cododo), Aruban cat eye snake (santanero) and endangered rattle snake (cascabel) are just some of them, you can also admire these close in the park's Visitors' Center.

For more information, visit

the website www.acf.aw

The Lighthouse

No, you would not think of this as a hidden gem. The California Lighthouse is actually one of the most known highlights in Aruba and many repeated guests most probably took the ride uphill already. But, there is a significant change to this tower. Since September



2016 you can climb the top. In 2015 Stichting Monumentenfonds started the restoration of the California Lighthouse. The project finished in September 2016 and the Lighthouse is now open for visitors to enjoy the beautiful view from the top. The construction of the California Lighthouse started in 1915. The name ‘California’ came from a vessel of the West India Company and Pacific Steamship Co. called ‘California’ that shipwrecked in the area in 1891. Therefore they came up with the idea of building a lighthouse that could indicate the island's eastern

tip to ships with its light.

Kayak in the Mangroves

Mangel Halto at Savaneta is definitely a place not to miss out on. The beautiful beach with the natural mangroves is simply a beauty, but if you are into a more active way to enjoy the nature: take a kayak. While you are doing some workout—as it might get a little windy and rough—you will see the island from a different perspective. You can even make a stop to do some snorkeling at the reef. It's fun, it's healthy and for sure something else. □



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Up for a snorkeling adventure in Aruba? Top 3 shipwrecks to explore

(ORANJESTAD) – Aruba is not only the perfect vacation destination to sit back and relax on the sandy beaches but also has great snorkeling spots for passionate adventurers to explore. On the coast of the island, there are various shipwrecks that have become fan-favorites over the years. Here are the top 3 shipwrecks you should explore.

SS Antilla

Dubbed "The Ghost Ship", SS Antilla is the biggest and most visited shipwreck site off the coast of the island. Located in Malmok, this 400-foot ship's story is one of capture and sabotage during WWII.

After Germany invaded The Netherlands, Dutch authorities ordered the confinement of the ship's German crew, who were ported in Aruba because it needed to find a neutral port. The Dutch ordered the ship to be confiscated, but the German crew had other plans. Taking advantage of a delay caused by an anticipated armed resistance, the Germans started scuttling the ship, opening her seacock and setting her ablaze.

Eventually, the crew was arrested, but SS Antilla could not be saved by the Dutch forces. The Dutch fired two rounds of their 35mm gun aboard the 'Aruba' at SS Antilla and left her to sink.

The shipwreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you'll be surrounded by

hundreds of tropical fishes, but the shipwreck alone is already impressive enough.

SS Pedernales

Like the Antilla, the story of SS Pedernales dates to WWII. Pedernales was used as a lake tanker between Venezuela and Aruba, and sailed under British Flag. At this time, The US and Britain were using Aruba and Curacao as fuel stations for the war ships.

Under operation Neuland (disruption of British and American oil sources), Germany fleets bombed Pedernales. The ship was later cut into three sections, two of which were taken to the US for reconstruction. The remaining part stayed in Aruba and was used as target practice. Eventually, the ship became a snorkeling site that has attracted many visitors throughout the years.

Pedernales lies on the northwest coast of Aruba, and is no more than 10 feet under water, making it an ideal site for snorkelers and divers of all levels.

Jane Sea Wreck

The Jane Sea Wreck lies near Palm Island at 100 feet underwater. Jane's story is heavily speculated, making her origin a tale of legends.

Launched in 1959, the 190-foot ship was initially called "Blackthorn". Her last owner, S&D Shipping Ltd. named her Jane Sea. Jane was a cement freighter between Venezuela and Aruba.

The story goes that the Jane

Sea arrived one day at the Barcadera Harbor, where Aruban customs discovered several tons of cocaine. The ship was confiscated and petitioned went out for her owner to claim her. However, several years went by and no one came forward to claim the ship, so dive operators decided to sink her as an artificial reef. This happened in 1988. Jane Sea earned the nick name Jane C, because of the illicit white powder discovered on board.

Jane is now beautifully overgrown with coral and is home to a diverse set of marine life, like turtles, octopus, crabs and sometimes even nurse sharks.

The stories behind these shipwrecks enriches their exploration and offers snorkelers and



divers a glance into the past, as well as the beautiful marine life that have molded these wrecks into their home. So, grab your equipment and discover another side of what Aruba has to offer!

We highly recommend you embark on your adventure with the guide of a professional and be sure to take of yourself and Aruba's precious nature. □

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The stories of “Compa Nanzi”

(Oranjestad)—The most popular character you may hear about in the Caribbean is Anansi, known locally on Aruba as “Compa Nanzi”. Local children grew up hearing the tales of the conniving spider, and his legacy forms part of the oral narrative tradition that is common in Aruba.

Although the stories are most popular in the Caribbean, “Compa Nanzi” is not entirely unknown globally, especially not in the West African region. Brought to the “new world” by enslaved Africans from Ghana, the historical thread of how Nanzi was introduced on Aruba follows the enslaved Africans in Curacao during the colonial era, which saw the biggest population of enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean.

The stories of Compa Nanzi were a sign of hope for freedom among the slaves, who passed around different stories involving the famous spider through word of mouth, due to not being able to express their native culture in the new world. These stories were a way to not only preserve their culture, but it acted as a medium for relief during the harsh treatment to which they were subjected to.

It wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the stories of Nanzi were written down in different languages. However, not all stories are completely alike in every country, as is the risk of oral

story telling. However, one thing will always be dominant in Compa Nanzi's stories: his sneaky ways to get what he wants!

How Nanzi fooled the king
One day Nanzi was taking a stroll near the castle of Shon Arei, the king. He had this sudden urge to walk in. He didn't think too much about it and committed to what he had in mind. It was a warm afternoon, and the castle personnel were taking their afternoon nap. Even the soldier guarding the castle door was fast asleep, snoring so loud that his beard bounced up and down on his chin. Nanzi just slipped past him, looked back for a moment then walk right on in.

Nanzi stumbled upon the king's quarters. With all his excitement he sat in the king's throne, and put on his crown that was hanging on the side of the throne. It was very hot that day, and it wasn't long until Nanzi too fell asleep, right there on the king's throne. He was so deep in sleep and snoring so loud, that even when the king found him in his seat, Nanzi did not even notice.

Shon Arei was flabbergasted by the sight of Nanzi on his throne, wearing his crown. How disrespectful! “Soldiers, get him!” he commanded. Nanzi was sound asleep, but when the soldiers picked him up, he jumped from fright. By then though, the soldier already had him in their hold.



“Put him in a sack, stitch it up and throw him in the ocean!” the king said furiously. Two soldiers immediately entered the chamber, took the crown off Nanzi's head and pushed him in a sack.

Nanzi was terrified; it looks like this time he won't get away with his schemes. To get to the ocean, the soldier walked a long distance, and where beginning to feel very thirsty. Luckily they passed by a pub, and decided to have a nice cold beer. They set the sack with Nanzi in it outside and went to enjoy the refreshments. Nanzi was still trembling with fear in the sack.

What is that he hears? A herd of sheep walking by?
“Compadre, listen here!” Nanzi screamed as loud as he could. The sheep herder got close to the sack. “What is this?”

“Man, there is something very beautiful in here that you can see. It's very rare and strange, but indeed, there is something so beautiful in here that you've never seen or will ever see,” Nanzi told the herder.

The herder, very dumb, believed Nanzi's word. “Let me see!” he said.
“Well if you must insist,” Nanzi said, “I'll let you take a look, but only for a quick second.” The herder opened the sack, and Nanzi immediately jumped out. Before the herder could even take a look into the sack, Nanzi pushed him in it, and the herder fell head first in.

Nanzi didn't waste any time, and closed off the sack real tight. He then picked up the herder's hat and starting walking behind the

traveling sheep as if nothing happened. After a little while, the soldiers headed back outside to continue their journey. As they picked up the sack, the poor herder started screaming to let him out, but the soldiers ignored him, thinking it was Nanzi.

Shon Arei went strolling a while later. He thought to himself: “This time Nanzi could not get away with his foolishness. He probably drowned in that sack ages ago.” That is why, when he saw Nanzi walk behind the herd of sheep on the street, he was flabbergasted again. “Nanzi! Aren't you suppose to be at the bottom of the ocean floor?”

“I was, Your Majesty,” Nanzi replied. But you know what; there are so many things to see down there in the sack! Like this herd of sheep. Seeing that they had no herder, I started walking behind them and gained their trust pretty quickly. At the bottom of the ocean there are so many wonderful things, like diamonds, and bags of gold. Chests of silver and other precious stones,” Nanzi told the king.

“What is that you say?” the king was intrigued. “I want to see it too!” The king immediately demanded to his soldiers to be put in a sack and be placed in the ocean. Naturally, Shon Arei died because of this. He was never found again. Nanzi followed the soldier back to the castle, where sat once again on the late king's throne and put his crown on. He took possession of all of Shon Arei's belongings, and lived the rest of his life as king. □

Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilda Pinto.



Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the same, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherlands Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the sub existence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pil-



lar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experiences by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.

Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural de-

velopment of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Pitternella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelkboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works.

The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued

prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness in the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamentu, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/Dera Gay (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. □

Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

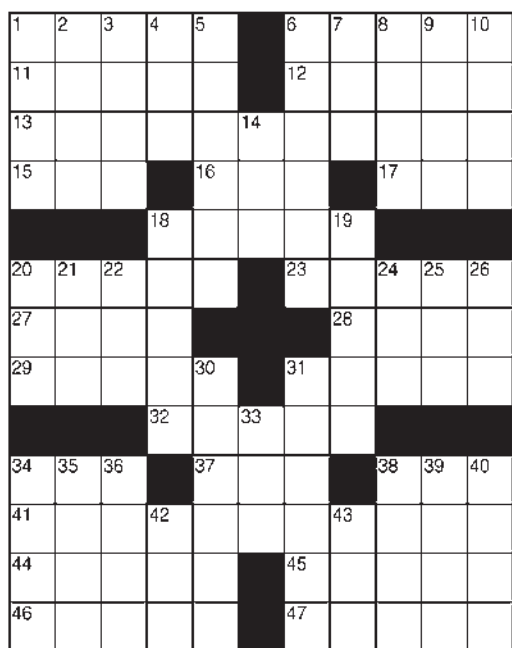
- 1 Syrup source
- 6 Warms up
- 11 Starry hunter
- 12 Houston player
- 13 Heading to sea
- 15 Utter
- 16 Bit of humor
- 17 Buck's mate
- 18 Plentiful
- 20 Spanish resort isle
- 23 Superfluous
- 27 Blowgun ammo
- 28 Lowly worker
- 29 Start
- 31 Female donkey
- 32 Polite
- 34 TV spots
- 37 Quarterback Marino
- 38 Sack
- 41 Job for a judge
- 44 Deeply impressed
- 45 Singer Ronstadt
- 46 Famed fur tycoon
- 47 Finished

DOWN

- 1 Forest growth
- 2 Region
- 3 Feel sorry for
- 4 Auction buy
- 5 Puzzle
- 6 Negotiate a price
- 7 Snaky shape
- 8 Slightly
- 9 Half a sextet
- 10 Foot part
- 14 Afternoon break
- 18 Early Mexican
- 19 Kick out
- 20 Wedding words
- 21 Prohibit



- 22 Form 1040 org.
- 24 Toe count
- 25 Director Howard
- 26 One or more
- 30 More neat
- 31 Commercial song
- 33 Mover's truck
- 34 China setting
- 35 Bears' lairs
- 36 Sports figure
- 38 Rock group
- 39 Staff member
- 40 Delighted
- 42 Binary base
- 43 Storage site



1-17

A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-17

CRYPTOQUOTE

CTM PO KSYT RPV XPMPVT

GRI, SGZ CTM PO KSYT RPV

ZVTSKO MRKRVVRI'O VTSCHMA.

— KSCSCS ARPOSXJSH

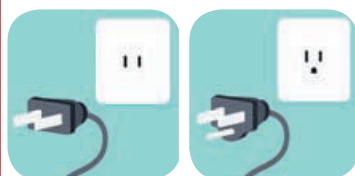
Cryptoquote: WE SHALL OVERCOME BECAUSE THE ARC OF THE MORAL UNIVERSE IS LONG, BUT IT BENDS TOWARD JUSTICE. — MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Cruise ship Schedule: Jan. 07 - 11 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
WED	07	CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	B	1
		BRILLIANT LADY	10.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	11.00	20.00	I	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	08	AIDABLU	08.00	18.00	B	1
		SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	18.00	C	1
		BRILLANCE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
FRI	09	OCEANIA NAUTICA	07.00	19.00	B	1
		MS RENAISSANCE	09.00	18.00	C	1
		CARNIVAL DREAM	09.00	22.00	I	1
SAT	10	SEVEN SEAS GRANDEUR	07.00	15.00	B	1
		NORWEGIAN STAR	07.00	19.00	C	1
SUN	11	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 8 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

8	1	5	6			7		
7				4	1	5		
	6					1		
		1		3				
		8			6	9		5
	9							8
5								
9	7		3	2	5			1
				6	9			2

Difficulty: ★★★★★

1/9

Answer to previous puzzle

2	6	3	8	9	7	4	1	5
5	8	4	6	1	2	7	9	3
9	7	1	3	4	5	6	2	8
3	2	9	5	7	4	1	8	6
4	1	7	9	8	6	5	3	2
6	5	8	2	3	1	9	4	7
1	3	6	7	2	9	8	5	4
7	9	2	4	5	8	3	6	1
8	4	5	1	6	3	2	7	9

Difficulty: ★★★

1/8

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DeepSeek's AI gains traction in developing nations, Microsoft report says

By CHAN HO-HIM and
MATT O'BRIEN

AP Business Writers

HONG KONG (AP)—DeepSeek, the Chinese tech startup that rivals OpenAI's ChatGPT, has been gaining ground in many developing nations in a trend that could narrow the gap of artificial intelligence adoption with advanced economies, a new report suggested.

In the Thursday report, researchers from Microsoft said global adoption of generative AI tools reached 16.3% of the world's population in the three months to December, up from 15.1% in the previous three months.

Yet the divide of AI adoption in developed and developing countries is widening, the report noted, with AI adoption across what Microsoft characterizes as the global north growing nearly twice as fast as in the global south. "We are seeing a divide and we are concerned that that divide will continue to widen," said Juan Lavista Ferres, chief data scientist for Microsoft's AI for Good Lab, which used anonymized "telemetry" to help track global device usage.

Countries that invested early and consistently in digital infrastructure and AI led in terms of shares of users, including the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, France and Spain, according to the report. Some of Microsoft's figures overlapped with the findings of a Pew Research Center survey published in October that mapped which countries are more excited than concerned about AI. In both reports, for instance, South Korea stood out in its embrace of AI.

Microsoft has a vested interest in AI adoption its business and much of the tech industry and stock market is staking its future on AI tools becoming more widely used and profitable but Lavista Ferres said his lab is looking more broadly at the topic. His research-



The smartphone apps DeepSeek page is seen on a smartphone screen in Beijing, Jan. 28, 2025. Associated Press

ers found that the rise of Chinese startup DeepSeek, which was founded in 2023, has fueled wider AI adoption across the developing world given its free and "open source" models – with key components available for anyone to access and modify. When DeepSeek released its advanced reasoning AI model called R1 in January 2025, which it said was more cost-effective than OpenAI's similar model, it raised eyebrows in the global technology industry and many were surprised by how China is catching up with the U.S. in tech-

nological advancements. Leading science journal Nature published peer-reviewed research co-authored by DeepSeek founder Liang Wenfeng in September, describing it as a "landmark paper" from the Chinese startup. Lavista Ferres said DeepSeek is a "good model" for tasks like math or coding, but it operates differently from U.S.-based models on topics like politics. "We have observed that for certain type of questions, of course, they follow the same type of access to the internet that China has," he said. "Which

means that there will be questions that will be answered very differently, particularly political questions. In many ways that can have an influence on the world." □



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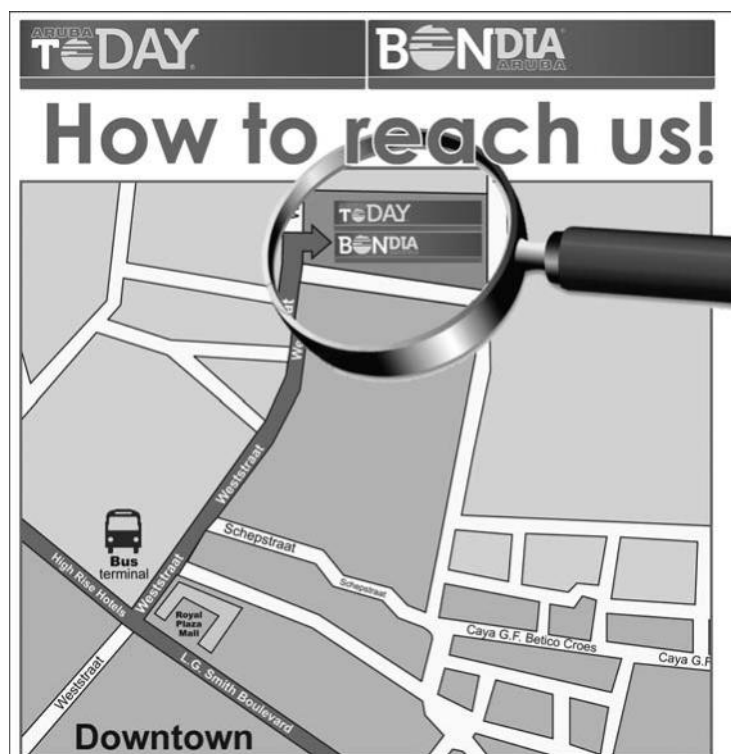
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

How Americans feel about crowdfunding websites like GoFundMe, according to an AP-NORC poll

By **JAMES POLLARD and LINLEY SANDERS**
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Quintin Sharpe considers it a duty to support those without means. Whether collecting food pantry goods through local service groups or helping out his parents' nonprofit music school, he regularly gives back to his small-town waterside community in southeast Wisconsin.

But the 27-year-old wealth manager encountered a situation last year that prompted another form of charity. A former classmate's father got "blindsided" in a motor vehicle accident, he said, and crowdfunding proved to be the "easiest way to help" with hospital bills. He donated more than \$100 to the family's GoFundMe campaign. "Crowdfunding can be a little bit more expedient because there's less reporting," Sharpe said. "Funds are going directly to one site. It doesn't have to go through a board, doesn't have to get approval from a lot of people."

Sharpe is among the roughly 2 in 10 U.S. adults who donated money to a crowdfunding campaign last year, according to the results of a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, with medical expenses proving most common.

Crowdfunding, or pooling donations online through organized platforms such as GoFundMe, has emerged as a convenient way to seek help covering costs for emergency treatment, Little League sports equipment and anything between.

But the poll also shows Americans including crowdfunding donors have some doubts about whether people who crowdfund really need the money and use it responsibly. Most U.S. adults don't have high confidence that crowdfunding sites charge reasonable service fees or that campaigns generally reach their goals.



The home page for the crowdfunding platform GoFundMe is shown on a device in New York, Oct. 16, 2024.

Associated Press

Sharpe said it would be "naive" to think every campaign is "aboveboard."

"Ultimately, it depends on the person receiving the funds, if they're gonna do what they say they're gonna do with it," he said.

Most crowdfunders give small gifts

Participation still lags behind more formal avenues for giving.

Overall, the share of Americans who said they had given to a crowdfunding campaign was far fewer than the roughly 7 in 10 who indicated they made a charitable contribution in 2025.

These efforts lend themselves to small gifts. The AP-NORC poll found that about 6 in 10 crowdfunding donors gave \$50 or less when they last supported a campaign.

The lower donation sizes underscore the importance of strong personal networks. Without offline connections, or large social media reach, campaigns can face difficulties reaching the critical mass of small-dollar contributors necessary to meet their goal. Karla Galdamez, a former teacher from California, supported her first crowdfunding when a fellow educator died by suicide. She knew him "a little bit,"

she said. A group of teachers started a GoFundMe, and she didn't see another more effective way of collecting donations for his family.

"The word spreads pretty fast like that," Galdamez said. "Then people start sending each other links. And it works."

Medical expenses resonate with donors

Sites are often filled with requests for tens of thousands of dollars to help subsidize health care costs or as campaigns often put it, the "long road to recovery." So ingrained is the practice that some patient advocates even recommend crowdfunding to avoid debt.

Sure enough, medical expenses and health care causes proved to be the most commonly supported category in the AP-NORC poll. About 4 in 10 U.S. adults who donated to campaigns this year said their last donation fell in this category, highlighting Americans' high levels of concern about health care costs.

Jeremy Snyder, a bioethicist who researches medical crowdfunding, said its continued prevalence reflects the persistent gap between what insurance covers and what health

care costs. People might also find it easier to seek help covering medical costs which can be justified as non-negotiable, one-off emergencies than other expenses.

He fears more patients will be driven to crowdfunding with the recent expiration of enhanced tax credits that helped reduce the cost of health insurance for most Affordable Care Act enrollees.

"Costs keep going up," he said. "Coverage is still a struggle and probably getting worse."

The second most common cause for crowdfunding donors was memorials or funerals. Following that category was groceries or other daily necessities, veterinary expenses or animal causes and natural disaster relief.

Doubts about crowdfunding sites' fees

There are broad doubts, though, about whether the crowdfunding sites charge reasonable service fees.

The AP-NORC poll found that only 44% of U.S. adults are at least "somewhat" confident that the sites charge reasonable service fees.

"I just think it's kind of crappy that people are in need and they charge a service fee," said Maria Barrett, 68.

"There ought to be a way to do that without it. But I guess there isn't."

Major for-profit fundraising sites say they only charge transaction fees to cover payment processing costs. GoFundMe takes 2.9% plus 30 cents off individuals' U.S. donations and solicits optional tips. GiveSendGo, a Christian alternative, similarly takes 2.7% and 30 cents.

There is a "pervasive sense" that platforms have "mandatory fees," apart from processing fees, Snyder said, when they largely do not. Consumers may associate companies with the larger platform fees they previously charged. In 2017, for example, GoFundMe dropped its 5% fee on those who launch personal campaigns.

"GoFundMe's model is intentionally designed to ensure the maximum amount of help goes directly to the people and nonprofits who need help, while giving donors the choice of whether to contribute anything additional for our services," Sarah Peck, GoFundMe's vice president of communications, said in a statement.

Lack of confidence about where the money goes

More than half of U.S. adults were at least "somewhat" confident that people who raise money through crowdfunding sites really need the money, and about half were at least "somewhat" confident that they use it responsibly. But only about 1 in 10 were "very" or "extremely" confident.

Barrett sends money as long as she knows the organizers or is satisfied with her research on their campaigns. The New Jersey resident recently donated to a woman with brain cancer. Her son went to high school with the patient's partner, she said, so she knew of their situation.

There was also the survivor of a house fire. "I know that the house was on fire because it was in my town," she said. □

Hawks agree to trade high-scoring guard Trae Young to Wizards, AP source says

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

Trae Young's tenure in Atlanta is over, with the Hawks agreeing to trade the high-scoring and frequently criticized guard to the Washington Wizards for a package including veteran CJ McCollum, a person with knowledge of the move said Wednesday night. Corey Kispert is also headed from Washington to Atlanta, said the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the trade had not received the required league approval. The person said the league's trade call will not take place before Thursday. Typically, teams cannot discuss pending trades until they are approved by the league.

"I know you all have questions for me that right now I'm not at liberty to talk about or answer," Hawks coach Quin Snyder said, unprompted, at the start of his postgame news conference Wednesday night following Atlanta's win over visiting New Orleans. NBA reporter Marc Stein was first to disclose that the sides were closing in on a deal, and ESPN first report-



Atlanta Hawks guard Trae Young (11) drives against the Miami Heat during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, Dec. 26, 2025, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

ed that the agreement was in place.

The Wizards held McCollum and Kispert out of their loss at Philadelphia on Wednesday night, and Young was on the bench in street clothes for Atlanta. He left the bench area in the fourth quarter, then returned and left again for the final time with about 30 seconds left slapping hands with a few fans as he headed toward the locker room.

He leaves Atlanta as the Hawks' career leader in assists (passing Doc Rivers) and 3-pointers (passing Mookie Blaylock). He's fourth on Atlanta's free throws list and sixth in points. Hawks power forward Mouhamed Gueye said he didn't know during Wednesday's game that the trade news had gone public. He had nothing but high praise afterward for his time with Young.

"That's T.Y. That's Trae Young," Gueye said. "When I first got here, he was one of the first guys that texted me, welcoming me to the city, gave me a lot of advice. Obviously, playing with Trae, as a big, is like a dream come true. I love him as a guy, I love him as a teammate. ... An Atlanta legend." Young is 10th in points, 12th in points per game, first in assists and first in assists per

game since entering the NBA as the No. 5 pick in the 2018 draft.

He is one of five players to rank in the top 10 in both points and assists since he entered the league; the others are Denver's Nikola Jokic, the Los Angeles Lakers' Luka Doncic, the Los Angeles Clippers' James Harden and Phoenix's Devin Booker.

Jokic has won a championship and is a three-time MVP. Doncic is considered an MVP candidate, Harden is a member of the 75th anniversary team, and Booker is a two-time Olympic gold medalist.

Young doesn't get the level of respect those players have earned. He's a four-time All-Star two of those nods coming through voting, two of them coming when Commissioner Adam Silver added him to the roster as an injury replacement. But the Hawks, this season anyway, have been better without Young. Atlanta was 2-8 this season when Young played; the Hawks are 16-13 without him. Over his career, the Hawks won 49% of their games when Young wasn't in the lineup as opposed to 45% when he played. □

Nick Saban's legacy lives on as his former assistants dominate the College Football Playoff

By **MAURA CAREY**
AP Sports Writer

It's been two years since Nick Saban last took the field as a coach, but he still has his hands all over the College Football Playoff, regardless of how it shakes out.

Five of the 12 CFP teams this year are led by a coach who served directly under Saban at one time or another. Four of them are still in the race: Curt Cignetti at No. 1 Indiana, Dan Lanning at No. 5 Oregon, Pete Golding at No. 6 Mississippi, and Mario Cristobal at No. 10 Miami.

"Four for four," Cignetti said. "There's a lot of dis-

ciples out there doing well. That's why he's the greatest of all time."

The disciples Cignetti speaks of are some of the most successful in the game. Cignetti and the Hoosiers will face Oregon in the Peach Bowl. Across the country, Cristobal's Miami Hurricanes and Golding's Ole Miss Rebels go head-to-head in the Fiesta Bowl.

Kirby Smart and the Georgia Bulldogs were eliminated in the quarterfinals. Lane Kiffin passed the baton to Golding after leading Ole Miss to the playoffs. Brent Key's Georgia Tech team had a historic sea-

son and fell just short of the ACC Championship game. Jimbo Fisher stepped away from coaching after a highly decorated career. Saban's disciples argue it's no coincidence.

"Everybody learned a lot from Nick," said Cignetti, who was Saban's initial receivers coach and recruiting coordinator at Alabama. "He was a great mentor, very organized, detailed; had a plan for everything. Managed lead, how to stop complacency, game day, recruiting, recruiting evaluation, player evaluation. I mean, he had it all. And if you were serious about

your career and wanted to be a head coach one

day, you took great notes or great mental notes." □



Alabama head coach Nick Saban reacts after running back Jase McClellan (2) scored a touchdown during the second half of the Rose Bowl CFP NCAA semifinal college football game against Michigan, Jan. 1, 2024, in Pasadena, Calif.

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John Harbaugh's sudden availability adds more intrigue to NFL coaching carousel

By **ROB MAADDI**
AP Pro Football Writer

The NFL coaching carousel keeps spinning. Eight teams are seeking a new head coach after Baltimore fired John Harbaugh on Tuesday and Miami fired Mike McDaniels on Thursday. Others could join the search if their team is one-and-done in the playoffs. Harbaugh's sudden availability after 18 seasons with the Ravens could create a new opening. Multiple teams are interested in Harbaugh, including a club without a current opening, two people with knowledge of the conversations told The Associated Press. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because the discussions are private. Teams with head coaches can't secretly work behind the scenes to hire Harbaugh or anyone else because the NFL adopted the Rooney Rule in 2003. It



Baltimore Ravens head coach John Harbaugh, left, and Pittsburgh Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin, right, talk before an NFL football game Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026, in Pittsburgh.

Associated Press

requires teams to conduct in-person interviews with at least two diverse minority or female candidates who don't currently work for the team. The Buccaneers aren't among the teams looking for a new coach because Todd Bowles is staying put in Tampa Bay, a person with knowledge of the

team's thinking told the AP. Bowles is under contract for three more seasons and is returning for a fifth year as head coach despite a major collapse in the second half. The Bucs went from 6-2 to 8-9 and missed the playoffs after winning the NFC South for four straight seasons. Bowles was the defensive coordinator un-

der Bruce Arians when Tom Brady led the Bucs to a Super Bowl title five years ago. The New York Giants, Tennessee Titans, Atlanta Falcons, Arizona Cardinals, Cleveland Browns and Las Vegas Raiders also have current openings for a head coach.

Here are three more teams that could decide to make a coaching change:

Buffalo Bills

Sean McDermott has led the Bills (12-5) to the playoffs in eight of his nine seasons.

But after five straight AFC East titles, they enter this postseason as a wild-card team with the No. 6 seed. McDermott and Josh Allen have been under pressure to get to the Super Bowl after falling short in the conference championship game last year. They lost in the divisional round the previous three seasons. The Bills won't have to face

Patrick Mahomes and the Chiefs, who knocked them out four times in the last five years.

The Bills are one-point favorites on the road against Jacksonville on Sunday. If Buffalo loses, it might force a change despite McDermott's success.

Green Bay Packers

Matt LaFleur has led the Packers (9-7-1) to the playoffs six times in seven seasons. He guided them to three straight 13-win seasons in his first three years but they lost at home in the NFC championship game twice. They've been the No. 7 seed each of the last three seasons.

Green Bay is a one-point road favorite against division rival Chicago on Saturday night. The Packers and Bears split their season series. Losing star pass rusher Micah Parsons was a major blow for Green Bay's Super Bowl hopes. □